



February 22, 2016

Environment Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3200
Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: 860-240-0440
envtestimony@cga.ct.gov

Re: **OPPOSE SB 832**, AN ACT CONCERNING THE PREVENTION OF THE HABITUATION OF DANGEROUS WILD ANIMALS

Dear Co-Chair Kennedy, Co-Chair Miner, Co-Chair Demicco, Vice Chair Flexer, Vice Chair Gresko, Vice Chair Somers, Ranking Member Harding, and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

On behalf of the Connecticut-based supporters of The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the largest animal protection organization in the country, please accept this public hearing testimony in **OPPOSITION** to SB 832.

We strongly support and promote humane resolutions to conflicts with wildlife and preventative measures to minimize risk of such conflicts.

We understand that the intention of this bill is to discourage habituation of coyotes and bears through reduction of food sources that are provided by people on their private property.

We oppose SB 832 as currently written for the following reasons:

- **SB 832 does not address the major sources of habituation.** Although we do not support the intentional feeding of coyotes and bears, this bill does not address the major sources of habituation (e.g., accessible garbage, pet food left outside, certain types of bird feeders). In 2016, we supported HB 5315, which would have allowed the Commissioner to promulgate regulations to prohibit or restrict the feeding of potentially dangerous animals. (The bill was amended on the House floor that would allow the Commissioner to promulgate regulations on the feeding of bears and coyotes.) Unlike SB 832, the broadly written language in 2016's HB 5315 properly allowed room for addressing the major sources of habituation.

- **SB 832 would unfairly penalize those who care for community cats.** Sec. 1 (e), which defines “potentially dangerous animal” for purposes of this section, includes “felidae,” a broad family of felids that includes domestic cats. Community cat caregivers provide a public service at oftentimes great personal expense, reducing cat overpopulation through TNR (trap, neuter, return) programs, a science-based approach that has been proven effective. Absence of this public service would generate a near-immediate outcome of overcrowded conditions and stretched resources at animal control agencies and shelters. Rather than penalizing these generous caregivers, and stretching the already strapped animal care infrastructure, emphasis should instead be placed on proactive solutions, like laws and ordinances that focus on incentivizing spay/neuter and humane management programs for community cats.
- **SB 832 would be unpopular and unenforceable.** Sec. 1 (e) contains the biological family names “felidae” and “canidae,” which include domestic cats and domestic dogs. Inclusion of these categories would be hugely unpopular with Connecticut voters, and as a practical matter, unenforceable.
- **SB 832 makes no provision for education.** Last year’s HB 5315 said that if regulations were created, such regulations shall include for first-time offenders (if violation is de minimus in nature) “the issuance of a written warning and provision of education materials.” We strongly support public education on these matters, and unlike last year’s bill, SB 832 offers no provision to educate the public.

SB 832’s solely punitive approach would likely be both unpopular and unenforceable, with missed opportunities for meaningful community engagement. As currently written, SB 832 does not serve to address the issue of conflicts with potentially dangerous wildlife. We therefore suggest that substitute language be considered that would address the matter of habituation and conflict prevention through public education on how to coexist with coyotes and bears, and provide that such educational materials include the topics of removal of attractants and hazing techniques, as these solutions are effective, humane, science-based, and sustainable. We would happy to assist DEEP in the creation of such educational materials.

Note: **Sec. 1 (a) and Sec. 1 (b) seem to be in conflict**— if Sec 1 (a) makes it illegal, it is unclear why Sec. 1 (b) is needed.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,



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The Humane Society of the United States

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